

March 6, 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community leaders mark one-year anniversary of New Bedford raids

New Bedford, MA – One year ago on March 6, 2007, the federal government rounded up 361 immigrants who worked at the Michael Bianco factory in New Bedford’s South End – mainly mothers with young children, leaving children behind at schools and day care centers. Organizations from across New Bedford and Massachusetts responded to this humanitarian crisis by organizing donations, legal services, volunteers, and a political response that echoed across the nation.

To mark this sad anniversary, New Bedford community leaders updated the media on the status of families, the relief effort, and what lies ahead.

Ondine Galvez-Sniffin, an immigration attorney with Catholic Social Services, summarized the status of the families’ cases. “Between 180 and 200 of the original 361 detained have been released from both Massachusetts and Texas, and over 160 have been removed,” she said.

Corinn Williams, Executive Director of the Community Economic Development Center of Southeastern Massachusetts said, “The fact that over half of all detainees are pursuing legal status is an indication of what a monumental waste of time and resources this raid was.”

“Individuals from across the country donated over \$196,000 to the New Bedford Immigrant Families/Niños Fund to help meet the basic needs of the families with minor children who were impacted by the raid,” said Craig Dutra, President of the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts. “The fund served 103 families with critical housing assistance, emergency utilities and food. Through this fund, over 145 children benefited from emergency assistance.

In addition to emergency services, Mr. Dutra expects the fund will begin to assist families with reunification. “We thank our donors and will continue to work to make sure all these families’ emergency needs are served,” he said.

“March 6, 2007 will always be known as the day that destroyed the immigrant family,” said Ali Noorani, Executive Director of the Mass. Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA). “While ICE has taken a small step forward to issue operating

guidelines for future raids, these are unenforceable and irrelevant to any workplace or community raid of less than 150 persons. The immigration raids must stop and our communities must once again be safe.”

MIRA works to advocate for the rights and opportunities of immigrants and refugees. In partnership with its members, MIRA advocates this mission through education, training, leadership development, organizing, policy analysis, and advocacy.

About the Community Foundation

Since 1995, area residents have been turning to the Community Foundation to make their philanthropic giving as effective as possible. CFSEMA is a public charity serving thousands of people who share a common concern – improving the quality of life in Southeastern Massachusetts.

While the Foundation’s primary grantmaking focus is on the SouthCoast communities of Greater New Bedford, Greater Fall River, and Southern Plymouth County, CFSEMA is a regional foundation serving 41 cities and towns. To date, the Community Foundation has assets of more than \$18 million and has distributed nearly \$6 million from 108 funds to humanitarian, educational and cultural organizations in the region. To learn more about the Foundation, visit www.cfsema.org.

###